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Advanced Test Reactor Shuttle installation ahead of schedule with aid of Idaho State University

IDAHO FALLS - The world's premier Advanced Test Reactor is two years ahead of schedule for the installation of a Shuttle Irradiation System. The Shuttle Irradiation System will allow for quicker insertion and removal of materials used to produce medical and industrial isotopes.

The new system will be tested with the help of Idaho State University. ISU's Brian Williams and his students, Danielle Perez, Chris Maughan, Logan Tew and Eric Williams, in the Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering departments, will conduct this component testing.

"Fabrication and installation of ATR's Shuttle Irradiation System, called the Shuttle, are under way after extensive planning," said Art Clark, INL deputy laboratory director. "We are pleased that ISU will assist in the testing of key components, and we plan for installation to be complete by September 30 of this year."

"The Shuttle makes it possible to produce commercial quantities of medical isotopes in ATR," said Frances Marshall, INL manager of Irradiation Test Programs for ATR.

On Dec. 29, 2006, the state of Idaho agreed to loan Battelle Energy Alliance, the contractor that operates the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory, $2 million to allow BEA to install a shuttle system for ATR in 2008, two years ahead of schedule.

As part of its INL contract, BEA committed to installing the Shuttle by 2010 during a four-year period. Projected cost for design and installation in 2004 was $6 million. BEA accepted Idaho's challenge of completing installation two years ahead of schedule, advancing the completion date to 2008. Current projections are on schedule for the 2008 installation.

"The ATR Shuttle operates much like the shuttle system at a bank's drive-up station, except that the capsules are smaller than a roll of pennies," said Gerry McCormick, INL project manager for the Shuttle design and installation. "Sixteen of them are loaded into the Shuttle send/receive station under eight feet of water. They are water transferred along stainless steel transfer pipes over 100 feet long to the reactor core. We are very grateful to have ISU as part of the project team supporting the Shuttle hardware demonstration."

ISU President Arthur Vailas is pleased with the opportunity to partner with INL. "ISU is excited about participating in a project that aids cancer research and treatment of patients," Vailas said. "This important effort underscores the strength of public-private partnerships that contribute to better health."

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